WOODS

NATURE'S PROTEST AGAINST COUNTER-CONCEPTIVES

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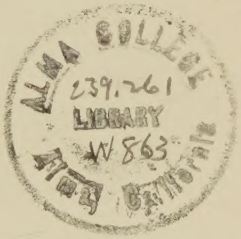

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UNIVERSITY OF SANTA CLARA
SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA
1929

42900

Publication made possible through the generosity
of a Catholic layman.

Printed by
STARK-RATH PRINTING & PUBLISHING CO.
San Francisco, Calif.
U. S. A.

Imprimi Potest
Joseph M. Piet, S. J., *Praep. Prov. Californien*

Nihil Obstat
Dominicus Giacobbi, S. J., *Censor Deput.*

Imprimatur
Edward J. Hanna, *Archbishop of San Francisco*

Sti. Francisci in California
21 *Maii.* 1929.

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Chapter I

STATE OF QUESTION

That the means of preventing conception have of late years been multiplied and made matter of common knowledge, is certain. That this is the trade-response to a growing demand from married people, cannot be denied. Hence the important questions: How far is their use a sin? What is its gravity? How should the theologian meet it?

Until recently all were of one mind. To prevent conception by any positive means was a grievous sin. For it the confessor's severity was unyielding. The perpetuation of the race in the family was not only the primary, but also the essential end of the generative act. The allaying of concupiscence was a secondary end bound up with it, and so, lawful in virtue of it. Now doubts are raised. The independence of the secondary end is asserted. The right to use marriage for it alone, to the exclusion of the primary end, is defended. In theory the two ends are made equal. In practice, owing to the frequent recurrence of concupiscence, the inferior end becomes the superior. Thus is affirmed the consequential right to frustrate at will the natural term of the conjugal act.

Such radical ideas are still comparatively rare among Catholics. These, however, venture the opinion that the practice, though sinful, becomes grievous only on account of its grave consequences. Should these not follow, it would be of its nature venial only, becoming grievous only because forbidden.

From this to the conclusion that, such consequences failing in any particular case, the prohibition would lose its force, is an easy step. It becomes still easier because the popular mind, restricting those consequences to what is called race-suicide, takes their gravity to be *collective* rather than *distributive;* and consequently finds it impossible to assert the gravity of particular acts. Moreover countervailing utilities are always alleged to mitigate the seriousness of even collective consequences. The main argument for this position is that theologians, though they reprobate the use of faculties for mere pleasure, do not make this necessarily a grievous sin.

Others of sounder views do not question the truth of the older teaching. Now, however, that they see it assailed so fiercely, they begin to suspect that it has never been really demonstrated to evidence, and that for this reason it fails to impose itself on the lay mind. Whence they conclude that the moralist's more prudent course will be to rest on the authority of the Church testifying to the fact of divine prohibition, without entering into the question of the sin's intrinsic malice.

One cannot but doubt the efficacy of such a mode of combating a most aggressive evil. If Christian principles so long accepted seem to have lost their force, would it not be wiser to seek the reason, not in their intrinsic evidence, but in the antagonism of those to whom they are proposed, or in some defect on the part of those proposing them. That the whole world is going wrong on many a point of Christian morality, is clear. But this is no reason for presuming in the Christian position weaknesses hitherto unsuspected; and the theologian is needlessly timid who shrinks before an antagonist supplying in bluster what it lacks in reason. The world goes wrong because it wishes to be deceived. In its hunger for the indulgence

of the flesh it has cast off all shame. The practice we are about to consider falls in with its lust by cutting off the consequent burden. Any sophistry pretending to justify it receives the warmest welcome and is urged as the latest irrefutable word of modern sexual morality.

But to come to what is more important we hinted the wisdom of seeking the reason of the apparent failure of principles in some defect of those who propose them. The convincing force of truth cannot be lost. Nevertheless there is a philosophic maxim of universal application: "Whatever is received, is received according to the mode of the receiver." May it not be then that, theologians as we are, we with the rest of the Christian world received the teaching of a better day as hardly needing demonstration, rather as self-evident; so consonant was it with what old philosophers call *synderesis,* that is the instinctive, so to speak, intuition of fundamental right or wrong, lying at the base of all moral conduct. Should such be the case our proper course would be by closer analysis to comprehend more profoundly what hitherto we had penetrated but imperfectly. Nor need we blush at a deficiency only apparent. From the beginning the necessitating of a closer study of older teaching by the inroads of new error has been the unfailing consolidation of truth, as the turning from the doctrine of the past to meet novelties of error in new ways, has too often resulted only is a progeny of new errors. Such then is the task we have undertaken.

To accomplish it we shall define the wounding of a nature, and its frustration, enquiring what in these is lawful, and why. We shall examine the exact meaning of the perversion of natural functions and the malice it includes. We shall consider pleasure both as a motive and as an end, and see how to make

it the exclusive end is the more practicable as the faculty's operation is less various. From this we shall conclude that to do so strictly includes formal perversion, of which the gravity is to be measured by that of the natural end excluded, not by the adventitious good, to the obtaining of which that exclusion is made the means.

From the fact that to lie, though it perverts the faculty of speech, is grave only in the injury done to another, an extrinsic consequence, it is argued that the same is true of the perversion of the generative faculty. The argument will be solved according to the principles indicated above. Moreover, as the argument turns on the assumption that the social consequences of the perversion of the generative faculty are *extrinsic* to the disorderly act, its falseness must be shown. For this purpose the nature of the conjugal union shall be examined and defined.

Lastly we shall consider how the body of exact doctrine thus attained is to be proposed for the relief of troubled souls.

Chapter II

WOUNDING, FRUSTRATION, PERVERSION

St. Thomas points out that in employing creatures as instruments man does them usually a certain violence, inasmuch as he constrains them to what is outside their natural powers. The arrow hits the target through the direction imposed on it by the archer. The clock marks the passage of time because its weights descend according to the measure imposed by the maker. Moreover, what he does to other creatures, man does to himself. His legs by nature walk, run, leap. He imposes certain modes and they dance. Such violence perfects nature, and may, within just limits, be practised by man, individually or socially, towards his fellow-men.

Man deals thus with lower animals that they may serve his need. He tames the horse to labor, the dog to yield what it has taken in the chase. He goes further, doing them violence that hurts their nature. Sometimes he deprives an organ of its natural operation, as when he alters a bull. In this the nature is *wounded*. If leaving organ and nature intact, he should deprive their operation of its natural effect, he would *frustrate* nature. The cook boiling eggs frustrates the nature that produced them.

Seeing the aptitude of such creatures to serve man's need, man's need of that service, man's intelligence perceiving that aptitude and turning it to use, the natural submission of the irrational creature incapable of recognizing or resenting the violence, we see the Creator's law. Rising to the moral order we understand that it accords no less with taurine nature to change

a bull into an ox, to plough, than to leave it unaltered, to propagate its kind; and that the hen serves that law, whether its eggs are used for food or to renew the poultry-yard. Hence, whether it be wounded, or frustrated, or preserved intact, the use of the irrational nature according to the universal order is always legitimate.

Between the irrational creature and the rational yawns a chasm. Rights connoting obligation spring necessarily from the rational nature. That the irrational nature can give no foundation for rights, is equally necessary. Upon those elementary facts rests the just subjection of the brute nature to the human. Upon them rests equally the essential iniquity of so subjecting man to man. By no plea of prevention of crime, of extirpation of disease, of race-improvement can one be justified in wounding or frustrating the nature of the humblest of his fellows.

Obscurity in this comes from the ignoring of the chasm. Modern science, as characteristically *modern,* would obliterate the difference between man and brute. It explores the brute-nature for indications of intelligence: it will not distinguish man's intellectual operations from his sensations. The practical consequences appear daily. Emotionalists weep over the neglect of the brute's imaginary rights: they watch with approving eyes the callous sociologist tampering with the rational creature's real rights. This sad apathy towards man's essential rights is efficacious in disposing the modern mind to indulgence regarding the abuse we are about to discuss.

To pervert a nature is more than to wound or to frustrate. To *wound* is to injure physically so as to deprive a nature of its fullness of operation. To *frustrate* leaves nature and operation intact, but takes away the physical effect. To *pervert* is

to turn the operation from its appointed end to something incompatible with it. It supposes therefore, a natural end appointed by the Creator, the knowledge of that end and the deliberate substitution of another excluding it. Hence, St. Thomas explains perversity as a refusal to follow, as one ought, God's will. (In Ps. xvii. 15). Through material accidents a nature may be wounded or frustrated physically: there can be no perversion purely physical. Ectopic generation, for instance, frustrates nature physically: it is not a perversion of nature. To be such, it would have to contain an intelligent cause turning deliberately the physical process from its natural term. To treat as some do, the fertilized ovulum retained by some impediment in the fallopian tube, as an intelligent, voluntary, responsible and, therefore, guilty agent, is the height of absurdity.

Perversion, then, takes us into the moral order. It is a deliberate violation of the Creator's law. That which we are considering makes frustration its means, accomplishing in it the disorder deliberately planned of turning the generative faculty and its act from the end for which they exist. Its gravity is to be measured by that end so extinguished, not by that of the end substituted. This, if evil in itself, may add even another kind of sin. On the other hand, however lawful it may be, however useful, neither the lawfulness of the end sought nor its usefulness can affect the malice of the perverting of the faculty.

To come closer to our question, the Creator in His Wisdom has attached to the generative act intense pleasure, thus drawing man to what he foresees may result in suffering and life-long care. To seek in it that pleasure, to be drawn proximately to it by the appetite for that pleasure, is in full accord with the nature God has given us. Further, to seek that pleasure hoping that those sufferings and cares will not follow, to re-

joice in escaping them, to use marriage knowing that for accidental natural reasons conception is impossible—in all this there is no violation of order physical or moral. Faculties and functions are not interfered with, but are left free to effect what nature grants them. There is no perversion of the faculty by the frustration of its act. To exclude consequent conception by means chosen for that purpose violates both orders. It is the deliberate frustration of the faculty by the perversion of its act. To confound the lawful with the unlawful under one vague expression, "to use for pleasure only," is to ignore the whole issue.

What is commonly alleged to excuse the practice—whether fear of pain or of danger in parturition, the expense of confinement, the difficulty of bringing up a large family on narrow means, the incompatibility of nursery cares with modern social life, a timid regard for a depraved public opinion regarding prolific unions—all, whatever their morality, are beside the question. Those who marry know the obligations they incur. If they determine beforehand to avoid them, they cannot plead such excuses for a course freely chosen. If beginning with a better will they find a burden heavier than expected, as Christians they will use the grace given to carry it. If they are losing the Christian sense of the marriage-Sacrament, they may choose—a perilous speculation—between bearing the burden, or abstaining from the use. What they may not do, is to pretend an equal right to enjoy the use and to reject the burden, to have the pleasure without the pain, by frustrating the marriage-act to use the faculty for pleasure exclusively, with the positive exclusion of its essential end.

Chapter III

PLEASURE AS A MOTIVE AND AS AN END

Against the accepted doctrine is urged that to use a faculty for the mere pleasure of its act may indeed become grievous on account of some serious consequence, but is not so of itself. To eat delicious food without need just to gratify the palate is not a serious sin. In the same way, therefore, to use marriage for pleasure only is not in itself grievous. We have already foreshadowed the reply. Nevertheless, to answer fully we must examine thoroughly the nature and end of eating and of the generative faculty; the exact meaning of "to use a faculty for mere pleasure," and how far in eating, on the one hand, and in the practice under consideration, on the other, it includes perversion of the faculty in the strict sense.

The physical end of eating is to preserve one's own life: that of generation is to begin another life. This new life comes from a single sexual union. As for any single marriage-act able to terminate in generation, it is impossible to know beforehand whether it will originate a new life, nor after the act can it be known at once whether such a life has begun. What is known for certain is that the modern practice if used in the act itself will prevent any new life; if used after the act, will destroy it. On the other hand, the effect of any act of eating is certain. The physical effect of preserving life is cumulative. Every meal has in it some partial causality: the full effect comes from no single meal. The omission of one from time to time neither destroys nor shortens life. Eating unsolicited by hunger does not

appreciably injure it. Thus St. Thomas solves the same argument brought to free from mortal guilt simple fornication, which merely ignores the natural consequence of the act and the obligation it imposes, but does not deliberately frustrate it. (Summ. 2.2, cliv. 2. 0; et ad 6m.)

But what is worthy of, if possible, more serious attention is, that while the generative act has but one essential end, and that physical, with which its other ends, contingent only, are joined intimately in the same species; that of eating has in the moral order its own ends with an analogical relation only to the physical end; and, at least, not inferior to it in dignity. One eats to live. The operation is purely physical and personal. Men eat and drink together to promote civil union, an end moral and social. We invite others to dine, thereby to show good-will and to bind them to ourselves, an end social and private. We celebrate happy political events in a banquet, an end social and public. On such occasions the viands are more delicate; the wines, more generous; so that the body rejoicing worthily with the rejoicing soul may have its share in heightening human joy. Yet the idea of satisfying hunger is far from that of the banquet. "We eat to live" is true inasmuch as it denies its converse: "We live to eat." Make it exclusive: "We eat only to live" and by shutting out the moral ends it becomes utterly false.

The relation between physical eating and drinking and the moral uniting of banqueters is analogical, on account of the analogy between bodies nourished from the same dish and minds sharing in the same thought. It is analogical only, because social union and common joy are not consequences of a simultaneous satisfaction of hunger and thirst. But this is just the relation between the primary end of marriage and its second-

ary ends. The natural end of marriage is physical, generation in the same species. That there are secondary ends is a consequence of its institution for its primary end, with which they are joined in the same species. The need of a remedy for concupiscence must connote the generative act. Unless the human race had been destined to perpetuate itself by generation there would have been no concupiscence; and concupiscence is quenched for the moment by that act which can have no other direct, intrinsic term than the originating of a new life.

Here one may say that inasmuch as the use of marriage to allay concupiscence promotes in man and wife the love of benevolence, it as least *touches* the moral order. It touches, as every human act must, the moral order; but that is all. It is bound up with the physical act, and is very far from the analogical relations of the banquet, in which, though the senses are flattered, the satisfaction of hunger, the eating to live are the last things thought of. As concupiscence connotes the generative act, so does conjugal benevolence connote the marriage union which exists only for that act. Because generation implies the support and education of offspring, a lifetime's work, the marriage-bond is permanent. Because man can reflect and reason upon his surroundings, he differs from irrational creatures, confined by nature to determined conditions and times, in being always open to the attack of concupiscence. The very intimacy of marriage makes this inevitable. Yet that union demands fidelity. Wherefore it alone may provide the remedy. This in its use, if the use is to be worthy of reasonable beings recognizing the nature of their state, must unite to concupiscence the love of benevolence since the use is not a mere satisfying of personal passion, but is, as a common act of husband and

wife, a mutual giving to satisfy a natural debt duly demanded, lovingly paid.

"To use a faculty for pleasure only," may be taken in two ways. There is the ordinary sense, that pleasure is the immediate motive and is alone adverted to explicitly. Now, that God puts into certain physical operations pleasure so that they may be performed readily as occasion arises. is incontrovertible. Hence to seek in the function that pleasure cannot be wrong in itself. Pleasure may, indeed, play too large a part, but the disorder would not therefore be grievous.

Nevertheless, comparing the two faculties, one perceives that the disorder would be relatively greater in the generative act than in eating and drinking. We have seen how intimately and variously eating and drinking enter into the round of daily life. We must now observe how diverse is their matter, and how with each kind the relation to sustenance varies. Bread is for all "the staff of life." The same cannot be said of plum cake. Grapes are pleasant and soothe thirst; but from the beginning their chief use has been to make wine, which plays a far more important part in the economy of life.

I find in my garden a luscious peach. I am not hungry; and, were I so, a peach is not very effectual in relieving hunger. It quenches thirst; but I am not thirsty. It appeals to my sense of taste as a momentary gratification. It is so nice, so fresh, so fragrant. I eat it to enjoy the pleasure; and, after all, God created the peach to give pleasure, as He created the potato for substantial diet. But I seek no other end of peaches whatever it may be. They may have some physiological effect; yet it would be absurd to say that I eat peaches as I do roast beef to procure that effect. If they do not build up bone and sinew they probably help the liver. If so I intend that implicitly. As

a good Christian using my peach for the pleasure it affords according to God's will I thank him in the habitual gratitude of my daily prayer. At the moment I do but perform with a clear conscience a legitimate act in its legitimate place in my life.

The marriage-act has neither such variety of matter nor so universal a place in daily life. From every point of view its use is more restricted. Moreover its appetite, being commonly most intense, demands a more guarded temperance: its disorders are more serious than any occurring in the eating of peaches. Nevertheless the most conscientious do not scruple to use it motived only by pleasure; in which, as in all gratification of appetite, there is often, doubtless, some excess, which however, will not with such persons be serious. All argumentation on behalf of the practice that does not go beyond the *motive* of pleasure is beside the question. According to the Creator's plan pleasure must usually be the immediate motive for the satisfying of appetite. In such things as peaches, cigars, jewels one will recognize pleasure as the most obvious end, though there are hidden in them higher ends such as opportunities of self-restraint and sacrifice which the well-regulated person admits implicity, attains to on occasion, and would count himself a sensualist were he to exclude them from his plan of life, or, in other words, were he to make pleasure his only end. But the end of the marriage act is unique, patent to all. Pleasure is its motive. But no one dare say that God created sexual appetite that man might make the pleasure of its gratisfication its end. I can eat my peach praising God for the modest pleasure it affords. I can smoke a cigar marvelling how God combines variously four simple elements to delight our complex sensitive nature. As jewels flashing from tint to tint charm the sight, I can meditate upon the glory of the

heavenly city. But as we shall see again from St. Thomas, no such blending of the sensitive and the spiritual, the characteristic of a mixed nature, is possible in the exercise of the generative function, in which the intensity of unmixed sensual gratification suspends the exercise of reason. There is therefore no question that there is but one assignable reason why God gave man the sexual appetite; and it is the propagation of his kind. This then is the essential end of the marriage union. Its secondary ends as we have said, and shall again see, depend entirely on that essential end, are bound up with it specifically as necessary consequences of it in the rational creature. If then pleasure cannot be regarded as the end of sexual appetite, to make it such is a disorder. To exclude the essential end designed by God, to do so positively, to use our intelligence to devise safe and sure means of doing so, so that pleasure becomes the sole end deliberately constituted as such, is a perversion of nature no words can adequately condemn.

From what has been said we reach a most practical conclusion, namely the possibility of so excluding every other end as to make the pleasure of its exercise the sole end of a natural function, must vary inversely with the number and variety of a function's ends and of its relations with daily life. The affair of eating and drinking is so complex that to make pleasure its sole end would need a will ingeniously reprobate. Pagan Rome came about as near to it as possible in banquets with their emetics, mechanical and medicinal, at hand to eject what had served a transient pleasure of palate and gullet, and make room for further delight. The social action of banqueters, men and women, was to promote mutually more and more recondite unnatural sensualities. It was the actualization of the Apostle's reproach: "Their god is their belly." No one could doubt the grievousness of the sin.

In marriage the exclusion is the easiest thing in the world. "I will enjoy the pleasure. I will take absolutely efficacious means to frustrate the end. Any druggist will furnish them." One so acting must be classed with the Roman banqueters. Looking at their public shamelessness one may find the circumstances of the sin less disgusting: its intrinsic malice is far greater. The individual marriage act is bound up with the origins of life as no single meal can be with its preservation.

The very ease of its commission testifies to the enormity of the sin.

Here one interposes: "You speak of means absolutely efficacious. The experts say that some are more or less uncertain". The testimony is hardly disinterested. The multitude of homes childless, or with only one child or two, prove that somehow the effect is obtained. Granting, then, the assertion, one must gather that destructive remedies are commoner than one likes to admit. However, there is question of *some* means only. Others, then, are fully efficient; and it may well be that the user's choice is governed by physical conditions.

Nevertheless no mitigating argument can be drawn from the alleged fact. The most efficient means would be wasted in cases in which, without them, there would have been no conception, were these known beforehand. What those cases are, the user knows not. But it is morally certain that sooner or later the contrary case will occur. Whatever means are used, are chosen deliberately against this case, to frustrate in it efficaciously the marriage act. In this is the gravity of the sin, which one commits each time one uses the means.

Chapter IV

ANOTHER SOPHISM DRAWN FROM THE GENERALLY ACCEPTED DOCTRINE ON LYING

The defender of modern practice is ready with another argument: "If not blameless, the use of counter-conceptives is venial." This he proves from the doctrine of the greater number of moralists on lying, as follows:

Speech is a necessary endowment of man's social nature. Unless he could communicate his thought to others, social union would be impossible. He must deal sincerely in his use of speech, otherwise society would perish. To lie, therefore, is in the strictest sense to pervert the faculty of speech. Nevertheless a lie is not usually mortal. It becomes so only through the gravity of its consequences. To prevent conception, therefore, becomes likewise mortal only by reason of its extrinsic effects. These in particular cases are commonly negligible, and are more than compensated by the good effects in the children allowed to be born.

The argument assumes parity. Let us then see where it lies and how far it extends. Man is given the faculty of speech for that intercourse without which there could be no society. He is given the faculty of propagating his kind, without which, again, there could be no society. In each case the assertion is of man universally, not of man taken distributively in each individual. Human nature, then, wherever found is endowed with those faculties to fulfil the Creator's purpose. Consequently, were lying to prevail, society would collapse through failure

of the bond. Were the generative act commonly frustrated, society would perish for lack of material. But it does not follow that every individual must tell the truth to prevent actual collapse, nor that every married couple must abstain from frustrating their union to prevent failure of social material. Here, however, the parity, purely speculative, ceases.

Coming to the practical, there is between lying and preventing conceptions a fundamental difference. The individual lie is not necessarily efficacious to deceive either because of the mode of telling it, or of the character or circumstances of the speaker. The modern use of counter-conceptives is practically sure, in each individual case either making conception impossible, or quenching the new life if conceived. Hence in the individual the former perverts but imperfectly the faculty of speech: the latter is invariably a perversion of the generative faculty adequate and complete. Again the matter of the lie varies from what is most trivial to what is most momentous. The matter involved in the frustration of the generative act is always the same and of the gravest moment, a human life.

Speech enters everywhere into social life. We ask and give information about all human interests from the greatest to the least, from what is of supreme importance to matters of mere idle curiosity. We speak to direct others or to signify our compliance with direction; to command, to encourage, to reprove; to teach or to exhort; to show neighborly kindness; to make contracts, binding ourselves to give or to receive; to recreate and to amuse. The world runs on because human nature is such that in all these we tell the truth ourselves, and expect it from others who do not disappoint our expectation. Should falsehood occur or error, the harm in most cases is but slight to the individual, its social effect, indeterminable. Things,

somehow, correct themselves. There is a levity in the one who misinforms us that provokes suspicion. His answer does not fit in with what we know already. We remove our doubts by questioning others if we think it worth while. Often the matter is so trivial as to make such trouble superfluous. We allow for vanity and the jocose lie. We recognize the probability of the officious lie. Thus the multiplicity of ends, the variety of characters, the wide range of matters bring about that the principal end of speech often forgotten, often wounded slightly, is not deliberately excluded. As regards it there is nothing irreparable, no strict frustration. The gravity of the occasional serious fault is measured by the individual injury.

With the generative faculty the case is quite different. Its exercise is recognized as, in some sense, binding on the race at large inasmuch as it will be cared for in the race at large. It is in no way an element in the complex web of the world's daily life. Nobody, kings excepted and perhaps dukes, perceives any personal obligation to provide a successor to take his place when death leaves it vacant. Those who elect to accept the obligation and enter the married-state, are not bound to exercise their function by any rule. Its use is intermittent, a matter of free choice. But when exercised the act is rigorously defined. There can be no varying gravity of obligation through variety of matter. What is involved is nothing less than human life and cooperation to its existence according to God's law, or the preventing of its existence or the destroying of it in defiance of God's law. There can be no allowance for differences of character. In this affair there is for all but one character. They are generators. They have undertaken a definite act social, not individual. They may not frustrate it of its social end.

This would be deliberate perversion graver than the frustration of any merely personal end.

What we have said is confirmed by facts known to all. One lies as a rule to excuse a fault, to indulge vanity, to oblige a friend, to improve with fiction a story founded on fact, to play a trick. There is a feeling that everything is not quite right; but there is no consciousness of a deliberate perversion of speech from the very end given it by God. Hence one does not run to complaisant confessors, nor turn to illogical arguments to quiet, or rather stifle a troubled conscience. On the other hand one prevents conception, not for some concomitant good in which the thing is almost lost sight of, but for the thing itself chosen deliberately as the only means to ensure the enjoyment of the conjugal act without being troubled with its natural consequences. Hence qualms of conscience compelling a search for justifications that do not convince, until by persistence in the abuse conscience is silenced. Then follows a deadness of soul testifying not to an intellect convinced, but to a will hardened in malice.

We called the exercise of the generative function a social act with a social end. This must now be explained in a study of the nature of the conjugal union.

Chapter V

THE CONJUGAL UNION

Those who use the practice under discussion will sometimes defend it by asserting their right to the full actualization of all their faculties. One might ask them how the right to *full* actualization can prove one's right in the very actualizing of a faculty, to deprive it of its essential term?. The fact is that the full actualization of all one's faculties is impossible within the limits of time and space. These necessitate coordination and subordination in which faculties mutually restrict one another. The norm of this coordination and subordination is not the individual will, but the end established for man by the Creator to return to Him by observance of His law. Hence one perfects his nature here below, not by indulging his appetites, but by disciplining them. Even the pagan philosophers understood this. The error flows from the exaggerated idea of individual man.

Now human nature is essentially social. Men are individuals with rights, duties, responsibilities. As individuals they must attain or miss the end of their creation. But they are social individuals. A purely individualistic human life would be impossible. Man needs his fellow-man, not occasionally but permanently. Society, then, is not a voluntary compact, the result of the sacrifice of individual liberties, but a human thing coexisting with the human race in virtue of necessary tendencies. It is the creature of God, not the device of man; a moral entity with its social intelligence, its social will, its social operation

as our daily speech makes manifest. Man is born in a society found in every land in every degree of civilization, imposed by primary natural instinct. That instinct which led his parents to conjugal society will impel him to the same. The law from the beginning stands to the end of time: "It is not good for man to be alone."

"They shall be two in one flesh" is the law of the conjugal union proclaimed in Paradise. Apart from the deeper spiritual sense, it expresses a profound natural mystery. Husband and wife, individually inefficient, each receiving from God to supply the other's lack, are thus in the Creator's hand one adequate instrument in the fulfilling of His creative word, by the generation and education of children. Thus marriage is constituted not only a permanent union but also a moral unit. This fundamental truth was not entirely lost even among pagans: "*Ubi tu Caius, ego Caia*" said the Roman bride on entering her new home; and the words expressed no slavish subjection, but those complementary relations whereby in the one house, at the one hearth, husband and wife were one. Nevertheless the pure doctrine was obscured, until Christian revelation restored it to be the universal foundation of social life for nearly two thousand years. Against it is asserted today that marriage is a mere contract in which both parties retain unchanged that fictitious individualism which is the corner-stone of modern sociology. It is therefore rescindible at pleasure. The marriage act is an act of two individuals consenting for the moment. Each is free in its performance provided there is no interference with the sensual gratification of the other. If both wish children, well and good. Should either use means to prevent conception, the other has no grievance. Of such ideas free union or trial marriages are perfectly logical consequences. With such indi-

vidualism dominating social thought, even those who have never formulated its principles, who are horrified at its conclusions cannot but be influenced. No other reason need be sought to tell why Christian doctrine becomes obscure.

This teaches that the conjugal union is not social only; but a real society perfect *in itself,* because it has the two essential elements; multitude united in will and operation, and authority maintaining the union and directing the operation. As regards its *operation* it is incomplete, because in it are social potencies not to be actuated in a multitude of only two. It is, therefore, a society absolutely unique, and may be defined: *A society perfect yet incomplete, which by generating its complement becomes complete in domestic society, the primary human society and the material foundation of civil society.* Here we see its special character—it is the origin of its own multitude. This it obtains, not as every other human society, by accretion, but by generation. It completes itself by what is therefore its primary constituting operation. We say *constituting* operation, because until this is effected the marriage-society is still in process of formation, with its consent, therefore, rescindible. Only in its consummation does it become immutable, its consent irrevocable, because that has been done which in its essential end, the propagation of offspring, demands an indissoluble society. The marriage-act is social, therefore, not individual. It is social, however, not so much as regards society at large, which it reaches only indirectly through domestic society—this is important as we shall see—but inasmuch as it is the natural act consummating conjugal society and ordained to the development of domestic society.

In it husband and wife act socially. Only as such is it allowed. This is the intimate reason why fornication, free union, trial

marriage are grievous sins. So St. Thomas explains the matter. "Fornication is grievous because it uses what is ordained for the existence and welfare of the family, and so of mankind in general, contrary to the good of both." (Summ. 2. 2, cliv. 2.0.) Such being the case of fornication, the sin of two unmarried persons free from the positive obligations of the conjugal state, what is to be thought of those who, bound by those obligations, pervert the very act of marriage to violate them?

It is the viewing of the perversion of the marriage-act, not as a social transgression of two become one in the conjugal union, but as the personal acts of two individuals, that leads some to regard its social effects as extrinsic only. An operation is the agent's application of means to obtain a determined end. Agent, means, end are therefore, its intrinsic elements. To apply the means and at the same time to prevent the end is an *intrinsic* perversion of the operation. In the marriage-act the generators acting as a social unit constitute the agent. They use the means instituted by the Creator to attain the end of their union; first the immediate end, the completion of conjugal society in domestic society; then the more remote and mediate end, the providing of fit members for civil society. To pervert their act in its very performance, thus to exclude its end, an intrinsic element, cannot but be intrinsic to the operation.

Make the marriage-act the personal act only of the two participating in it, and what follows? As a complete operation, it must have its intrinsic end, which is for each his or her individual end. The social end becoming now a mere extrinsic consequence to be admitted or excluded as circumstances persuade, what do the agents substitute? They make no secret of it. Nothing but the satisfaction of concupiscence. As this hides itself under the appearance of an honorable union, a degrad-

ing idea of marriage is making its way in the world that views approvingly the prevention of conception. No longer concerning itself with babies, fetters to a woman's freedom, a burden to the man who must toil in their support, it becomes "a union of souls," with its parties, "soul-mates." Thus a hypocritical euphemism designates a union of which the single bond is concupiscence. As long as mutual lust is vigorous the union is holy. As lust wanes the union becomes evil. The parties are no longer soul-mates. They must separate and look out each for a new union to be purified in the fires of carnal desire. Thus divorce is no longer a disgrace. It becomes holy, sharing in the double sanctity of the consequent unions of the parted couple, each in another mating of souls. Nor can these be viewed as mere accidental consequences. To exclude the well-ordered end necessitates the substitution of a disorderly end; since without a determined end there can be no operation. The substitution is therefore, intrinsic to the perversion, flowing spontaneously from the shameful principles which have displaced those proclaimed by the Creator's voice in the depths of our nature.

One might here suspect exaggeration. How many habitually preventing conception hold in horror the corruption of the idea of marriage. The answer is not far to seek. In the first place, many not dead to the teaching of faith, persist in their sin, grow callous in it, feel remorse but rarely, yet are quite conscious of their guilt. They do not pretend to justify the practice. Their defence is, "God forgive me! I can't help it!" These, not embracing the practice with utter abandonment of will, are not going to accept all the vileness of its logical content. Others, hardly influenced by religion, either because they have abandoned its practice, or, what is more common, have never taken it up, prevent conception without scruple, accept the in-

dividualism the practice implies; yet reject its last consequences. The will is free. One may see conclusions flowing from admitted principles, yet refuse them as a rule of conduct. One may turn the mind from considering them, and this the more easily as nature's voice is loud against them. Such cling to the traditional idea. Yet they must grow fewer and fewer as a new generation follows the old. For the social will knows little of scruples. It follows the trend of growing individual thought to embrace social doctrines. But these, once accepted, become part and parcel of social thought which advances steadily to their logical consequences. As for the individual, his social nature leads him to conform his will and judgment to the social will and judgment. Though taken distributively each is free in the matter, yet taken collectively the general multitude, unless it corrects the social will and judgment, must conform to it; and this the more readily according as it makes for comfort, pleasure, irresponsibility.

A last objection may be that the social difficulty usually considered as making the practice under discussion a grave matter, is economic, namely, the falling of the birth-rate below what is needed to maintain the standard of population. This surely is a consequence extrinsic to any particular act of preventing conception. It seems so because it transfers the question from the field of morals to that of economics. If the end of the generative faculty can be expressed adequately as the furnishing soldiers, sailors, operatives, mechanics, merchants, professional men and women, wives, husbands, etc. in numbers sufficient to ensure national prosperity; provided the number be maintained, it would be superfluous to enquire how. Since, however, the end is entirely different the objection loses all its force, which is apparent only to those so preoccupied with

modern materialistic individualism, as to have no idea of society conjugal and domestic.

The ignoring of these links between the individual and civil society leads to the erroneous notion that social effects are extrinsic to the perversion of the marriage-act. One who sees how St. Thomas makes the generation and nurture of its own multitude the proximate end of society conjugal and domestic, not, however, to stop there, but to do so as a means of providing its multitude for civil society, will think differently. In this one will be confirmed who goes on to consider that the due multitude for civil society does not stop at soldiers and so forth, but leads on to the due number for Christ's supernatural society, His Kingdom on earth, and so to the multitude no man can number of His Kingdom eternal in heaven; which is the adequate intrinsic end assigned by the Creator to the generative function of His human creature.

Chapter VI

MARRIAGE AND ITS SECONDARY ENDS

We have said more than once, and have, we think, clearly explained that the secondary ends of marriage and the rights they confer are so bound up specifically with the primary and essential end, that should this be excluded there would be no place for them. Yet, because the idea seems to grow that the chief end of marriage is to be the remedy for concupisccence, the matter becomes so important, that, at the risk of some repetition, we must give it a chapter to itself.

Marriage is the permanent union of one man with one woman. It is most intimate in its character. In both is the natural desire of the generative act implanted by the Creator; and here holds true the principle more than once quoted: "Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver." Man and brute experience that desire. But because they differ essentially, the mode of that desire differs in each. Man is more subject to it, and it is humiliating, perhaps, to recognize that this is to be ascribed to what makes him the brute's superior, his reason.

The brute, moved by instinct, is excited to desire only when the object is so presented as to appeal to it at the very moment as something good corresponding to its natural appetite. This supposes certain conditions, which, speaking generally without going into the explanation of particular cases, are found at fixed periods when through physical modification the female is apt to conceive. Otherwise male and female associate without

concupiscence. Man, reflecting and reasoning, recalls past pleasures and his partner in them. By his imagination he so clothes his memory with circumstances exciting passion, as to set him to seek the means of satisfying his appetites, using his reasoning powers to determine and to apply them. (Summ. 1, 2 xxxii, 3).

From this double consideration we gather, first, that the essential end of the marriage-act is the generation of offspring; secondly, that were man confined by law, as the brute is by necessity, to its use for that alone, marriage would be intolerable. Hence, in instituting marriage for generation the Creator willed it to be also a remedy for concupiscence.

This is confirmed by the fact that in the brute's generative act there is—not of course anything like absolute certainty—but a degree, nevertheless, of relative certainty, with its consequent cessation of desire, which has no place in man. By him the act may be repeated again and again under conditions apparently suitable, without effect. Were marriage to be used exclusively for conception this anomaly would ensue. There would in different unions—even in the same unions—be a period of free use, longer or shorter, to be closed abruptly by the fact of conception. This would be the more painful because, though the use of marriage is a remedy, it is not permanently so. As St. Thomas observes with Aristotle, it allays by its act the present concupiscence; but for reasons we have indicated, increases it for the future.

It must be observed that our argument assumes what is still generally held, that the sexual act is licit only in marriage permanent of its nature; that husband and wife may come together again and again, because any other carnal union would be unlawful. But the natural reason for the permanence of the mar-

riage bond amongst men, while the union of brutes is more or less casual according to their various natures, is drawn primarily, not from the persons united, but from the family thence arising. The generation and education of offspring is a burden filling the parents' life during their best years. Gestation and lactation are protracted. One child follows another, so that the family is made up of children of different ages, but all immature. When the last is able to leave the parental roof, the parents are verging on the decline of life. Only after these careful years do personal reasons come in to confirm the testimony of domestic life to the indissoluble union of two in one flesh. Now concupiscence has cooled. The love of benevolence nourished in the common bearing of the marriage-burden prevails. Dear to each other, neither spouse is such as to move desire elsewhere. They have but one mutual aspiration, to go hand in hand along the remnant of life's way, until they lie side by side in one grave.

But were the satisfaction of concupiscence the chief end of marriage; were one free, therefore, to exclude the natural effect of the marriage-act, to use his reason in devising daily surer and safer means to prevent or to destroy the life which by the Creator's will should follow; what reason would there be for any marriage-tie? The love of concupiscence is essentially transient. It gives no reason for permanence, but is rather the foundation of that continual change from partner to partner which characterizes this so-called marriage life today. It would be idle to draw any argument for permanence from the family, now made a secondary end, and so casual, that one may with equal blamelessness, accept or extinguish it, limit or encourage it. The logical mind, and in this the number of such minds grows daily, sees in the making of the satisfaction of concupis-

cence the primary end of sexual relation, the justification of fornication, free-love, trial marriage, frequent divorce, the formal abolition of marriage as such, the reducing of the virtues of that state to an absurdity.

One may think to find in the love of benevolence following that of concupiscence, the root of permanent union. To this we answer that benevolence, a permanent habit arising from its own acts, cannot come from transient acts of concupiscence. Were it otherwise, since habits are strengthened by the repetition of acts, it would follow necessarily that the protracted indulgence of mere concupiscence would heighten the love of benevolence, whereas everybody knows that its effect is just the contrary. Satiety follows and disgust, with the consequent desertion of the one once so greatly desired. Moreover, the love of benevolence is not so much the root of permanent union as its fruit. Those contracting marriage not in blind passion, but according to reason, enter on their new life with a radical love of benevolence. But this is because they judge one another to have the qualities called for by the life-long union they are beginning. That is to say, the radical love of benevolence comes from the determination to contract a life union, not the contrary. The resolution to contract a permanent union flows from the acceptance of the obligations of marriage, not from a preconceived radical benevolence. But this radical love, is it to grow up to the perfect flower and fruit? That depends on the future life. If this be in well-ordered marriage according to God's law, the full fruition of love will follow. If through frailty the life-partners fall into the sin of preventing conception, yet do so with half a heart only, conscious of the better way, retaining something of their earlier convictions, it may remain in a weak and maimed condition. If they frankly admit

and justify the modern practice, the root will perish before beginning to grow. Let us explain more fully.

All love is an expansion of the nature reaching out to union with the object loved. The union may be accomplished by drawing the object to oneself, the term of the love of concupiscence, which seeks the object to satisfy a personal need. Such love is individualistic: it seeks its own gratification in the possession and use of the object. Or again the union may consist in the giving of oneself to the object loved. But this giving connotes a corresponding giving on the part of the object loved, so that, each giving entirely, there is a mutual filling up of deficiency, and each rejoices in the service done to the other. When this love reaches its perfection the parties are said to be of one heart and one soul. It therefore is social in its character, the crown of their social nature. As such it is permanent, as the mere love of concupiscence is transient, passing with the enjoyment of its object.

The mutual giving between man and man for the common good, the expression, so to speak, of our social nature, lies at the basis of all society. It appears most perfectly in the conjugal union, first by nature and most intimate of social unions. Its common good, the effect of social cooperation, the end for which the social union is ordained is seen in the offspring, and this in the highest degree. They are neither the father's nor the mother's. Neither can both in their individual characters claim them. They belong to both inasmuch as these constitute one parental principle, one instrument in the Creator's hand. Children then are the bond of permanent union between husband and wife. They are such in hope, drawing spouses closer in view of the future pains of the one, and the future cares of the other. They are such in actual generation in which each

spouse supplies the other's deficiency, so that both constitute one reproductive principle of one adequate human nature. Thus the new life expresses their own as they are one social unit. So are they "two in one flesh"; so, too, do they say, "the children God has given us." In recognition of the mystery grows the love of benevolence from its first root in the promise: "till death do us part."

To some this will seem purely ideal. Where is the married couple who have so conceived their union? No, it is not so Marriage is a profound mystery, uniting apparently two extremes of sense and spirit. We have expounded the facts of the mystery as reached by theological analysis. They are not to be perceived by sense. But in every union contracted and sustained in the fear of God they find a response in what is purest in human nature, and are recognizable in their effects; as thousands will testify from their own experience. By their fruits you shall know them.

What has been said, we may confirm in viewing the matter from another stand-point. Though man is essentially rational, carnal concupiscence so obfuscates reason that in its act he can think of nothing else. This St. Thomas notes more than once (e. g. Summ. 1.2. xxxiv. 1 ad lm; ixxii, 2 ad 4m), observing that on this account some have erred in regarding the act as essentially evil. He refutes them on the ground that, though the act may at the moment suspend reason, it is undertaken in conformity with reason, and so responds to the rational nature. From this we gather, first, that to make the allaying of concupiscence the primary end of marriage, one must hold that the primary end of the Creator in planting that passion in man was to give him the pleasure of satisfying it by an act irrational in itself, reconcilable with reason only under

certain conditions. Secondly, to begin an act reasonably means to assign it a reasonable end. What other reasonable end can be given to the marriage-act than the one reason dictates, namely, that which all have hitherto recognized, the propagation of the race. This must in some way come into every marriage-act, as we have explained, as the primary end rendering honest the secondary end. Take it away, and the error St. Thomas refutes, would become a certain moral truth.

Man's social nature, we have said, makes the marriage-union social. The common good to be obtained makes the union permanent. Nevertheless it is certain that an individual's first motive to a particular society will usually be his own advantage. Similarly the first impulse to a definite marriage-union will be, generally speaking, the love of concupiscence. A man and woman perceive each in the other a desirable good which each would make in the fullest sense his or her own. But, as in the first case the impulse from utility blends with the fuller impulse of the social nature into a union of the individual will with the corporate; so in the orderly, unperverted marriage-union the love of concupiscence blends into the growing love of benevolence, that of permanent union of wills between man and woman giving themselves each to the other for the duties and responsibilities, the joys and the cares of domestic life for all the years to come. Because the marriage-union is ordained to domestic society, the consummation of the mutual gift is in that act from which conjugal society receives its complement, making it the domestic society as such. Because beyond all concupiscence is expressed the love of benevolence, the rule guaranteeing fidelity, charity, patience, sympathy, remains forever true: "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the hus-

band; the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife."

The love of benevolence in marriage, springing from its orderly use and by this nourished, is bound up specifically with the principal end to which conjugal society is ordained. But before all things the use must be orderly. Exaggeration in either direction tends to destroy the essential character of that love. Hence St. Thomas observes: "In marriage there is a double remedy against concupiscence. One, touching concupiscence itself, represses it. The other, touching the act, makes it honest through the good ends of matrimony." (4 Dist. xxvi, 2, 3, ad 4m).

No other reason need be sought for the modern failures of marriage than the selfish individualism of men and women in all marriage-relations. To pervert the marriage-union by the frustration of its act, is the very acme of individualism. The mere fact that both partners concur in it cannot change its nature, which comes only to this: two bound as a social unit to a definite social act concur to nullify it by an action essentially anti-social and individualistic.

Chapter VII

HOW THE FOREGOING DOCTRINE SHOULD BE PROPOSED

The objection will be brought that our doctrine is too metaphysical for the common mind. This is a general difficulty which all Christian doctrine meets today. As long as there is question of teaching only, that is of communicating Christian doctrine to intellects obedient to faith, it can be given catechetically on the authority of the Church. But Christian doctrine is in every article profound. When, therefore, it is to be presented apologetically the depths must be sounded. The faith has no more insidious danger, than the ignoring of this truth. How many after a long course of authors hostile to Christianity, finding themselves in difficulties through some reasoning and many suggestions, ask for a brief statement of the Christian position in a pamphlet of three or four pages. This, they fancy to be adequate. Yet should one ask them for a similar statement of the antagonistic science they would answer indignantly that this is too large a matter to be compressed into a pamphlet. So they gradually fall into unbelief, ignoring the fact that there is no science so universal and far-reaching, so certain in its principles, so logical in its deductions, as Catholic theology, to which they grudgingly grant an exposition and defence to be compressed into the space of a magazine article.

Sad to say, this matter of preventing conception is for many Catholics passing out of Catechism into Apologetics. Mixing in an unbelieving world, urged by argument, encouraged by

the practice of others, ridiculed as scrupulous, inclining through natural sensuality to the ease promised them, they are shaken. False principles occupy their mind obscuring the true. Indecision as to their future conduct fosters doubt as to their present faith. To help them one must have at hand, not only positive doctrine but also supporting reasons.

A question may be treated analytically or synthetically. The former, which we have used in these few chapters, breaks it up into its elements and appraises each. The latter, presupposing such an analysis, begins with the elements, joins one to another, until the complete concept is built up. The former is the scientific method; the latter is best suited for teaching. One who would deal with a troubled conscience must have, by a diligent use of the analytic process, all the elements clearly and adequately. He will then begin with the element which seems to be most adapted to the case before him.

This may be the universal agreement through so many Christian centuries, called in question only of late years; or the nature of the marriage-act so strictly animal that it is impossible to conceive its enjoyment as the primary end of Christian marriage. He may point out how all that is human, rational, virtuous, noble in Christian marriage is bound up with the generation of offspring; while the logical consequence of making the satisfaction of concupiscence the primary end of sexual union would be the abolition of marriage and the substitution of free-love. He might begin with the notions of frustration and perversion, or the difference between pleasure as a motive and as the exclusive end, with the evident disorder of excluding by the use of a positive means the natural term of the marriage-act instituted by the Creator. He might take up the social nature of marriage, in which the partners exercising the generative

function act socially for the social end of perfecting conjugal society in the domestic, so that the perverting of the function from that end is an evil entering intrinsically into that act, not a mere extrinsic consequence; or he might dwell on the disastrous social consequences in every branch of social order, wrought through the erroneous modern doctrine by exaggerated individualism.

But to have a perfect synthesis, element must be joined to element, argument must be supported with argument until the full-rounded body of doctrine is built up. We may say perhaps without presumption that the director of a sodality of married women might well from these few chapters develop a series of conferences on this prevailing sin, which so evidently makes inroads on the Catholic family, that to pretend the contrary would be worse than idle. Nor would it be amiss to treat the matter similarly in missions and retreats for men.

But the pastor of souls should not stop here. Our task, to demonstrate the intrinsic gravity of the sin, confined us to natural reasons. He must confirm his doctrine by rising to the supernatural order. Marriage is a great sacrament, not only in the grace it gives, but also in the mystery it contains, setting forth in union of husband and wife that of Christ and the Church. It is the glory of the Church to be the fruitful mother of children. Every operation of Christ in her is for that end. The Synagogue, the old Jerusalem, might be exclusive; she was not the Bride. Limit the fecundity of the Church, and she would not be the Bride of the Lamb, the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven. Christ came to save all men; she regenerates in her bosom all who will be saved. As one by one she brings them forth to the new life of grace she rejoices over each, as in each she offers a new child to her spouse. A mother has

sorrow in bringing forth. The Church sorrows over the many who persist in the way of death. But both alike rejoice over those born to natural and supernatural life. To give children to be regenerated to Christ in the Church is the glory of Christian marriage. The thought of using it and of preventing its fruit fills Christian husband and wife with horror. "Is it possible," they ask, "to turn to mere carnal pleasure this sacrament which carries grace for the performance of every conjugal duty? Can the creature dare to frustrate the Creator's processes of life?" How will such bear the reproach of the great Judge: "Again and again have you robbed me of those I would have created, redeemed, sanctified and saved to swell the number of heaven's citizens rejoicing in the light of My presence forever."

The crime we denounce is grievous from every point of view. It dries up natural affection by depriving it of its object. It obscures the natural perception of the Creator by frustrating His institution for the perpetuation of the creature. In strangling the primary parental instinct it confuses the whole field of conscience. It generates a hardness of heart, despising the supernatural life, in those who refuse to minister to the new natural life. It builds up a wall to separate from their Saviour those who wantonly impede His work of redemption. In a word, it blinds the understanding to the malice of evil and hardens the heart against the call to good.

We recommend instructions to "sodalities of married women," which under existing conditions are certainly called for. Nevertheless such is the growing corruption that something of the kind is necessary for the unmarried of both sexes. For them the practice is no secret. They discuss it. They justify it. They tell one another how they intend to act when married. These

should be taught with all authority the inevitable obligations of the marriage-state; that unless they are ready to fulfil them they had better remain single. They should know that it is not enough to form personally good resolutions. A union in which one persists in frustrating the marriage-act or in urging the other to do so, means a life of misery. They should know that reservations in this matter, either mutual or on one side only, vitiate a marriage-contract by depriving it of the necessary fullness of mutual consent. The consequence is dreadful. When sin has had its usual result, and those joined in mere concupiscence, weary of each other, appeal for a declaration of nullity; this will be hardly obtainable in the external order. Yet in conscience the parties will know that they are not married. Their plain duty will be to rectify their error by giving the full consent they had witheld. But will they do so, in whom the fires of concupiscence have been extinguished? Will they not rather turn to the divorce court for relief? Daily experience gives the answer.

Thus the faithful pastor of souls will be able to say with the Apostle: "I take you to witness the day that I am clear from the blood of all men; for I have not spared to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." (Acts. xx 26.27).

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TITLE Nature's Protest Against Counter-Conceptives.

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